7 State feminism and gender equality policies

The case of Spain (1983–95)[1]

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Since the 1960s and 1970s, institutions with the concrete purpose of improving the status of women have been set up, developed, and sometimes even dismantled in most advanced industrial societies. In social science literature, these institutions have been called 'state feminist' institutions, bureaucracies or machineries. The people who work in them are labelled 'femocrats' or 'state feminists' (Stetson and Mazur 1995). This chapter seeks to make a contribution to the analysis of the effects (if any) of these institutions on the formulation of gender equality policy, and to examine the relationship between state feminists and activists in the women's movement. This is a case study of the main (although not the only) feminist institution at the central state level in Spain, the Institute of the Woman (*Instituto de la Mujer*, IW) which was established in 1983.

The first section of this chapter presents the insights of scholarly and non-academic feminist literature into the contribution of state feminists to gender equality policy and to their relationship with feminists in society. The second section is devoted to the case study. I argue that state feminism in Spain has had a significant impact in the policy area of gender equality. The IW can claim a positive record in having persuaded other state units to include equality measures on their agendas. Nevertheless, the IW has hardly intervened in the implementation of these policies. The relations between IW femocrats and activists in women's organisations have been scarce and only very rarely cooperative in character. This gap between feminists within the state and in society has prevented them from pushing state officials further down the equality path. The concluding section raises questions for future research.[2]

STATE FEMINISM: ITS IMPACT ON GENDER EQUALITY POLICY AND ITS RELATION WITH FEMINISM IN SOCIETY

With respect to the impact of state feminist machineries on gender equality policy, two sorts of assessments can be found in academic publications and

in non-academic feminist writings. For some, these institutions have hardly had any effect on the policymaking process, since femocrats are too few in number in comparison with the total number of policymakers, and have little power and few political resources. For others, it is evident that some gender equality programmes have been established as a result of the efforts of the femocrats. These programmes have improved the status of their beneficiaries (albeit only a small number of women). Nevertheless, these achievements fall far short of the broad goal of the feminist movement in the last three decades: the attainment of a major and radical redistribution of power between men and women.[3] In the same way, it might be argued that the establishment of feminist bureaucracies has contributed to marginalising feminist demands, and to consolidating the insensitivity to women's concerns traditionally held by most state officials. This is so because the creation of feminist machineries might have encouraged policymakers in other departments to believe that they do not need to concern themselves with women's interests, since these are the exclusive responsibility of femocrats, or that the mere existence of these machineries means that women's most urgent problems have already been solved.

In contrast, other authors and activists have argued that in some countries the establishment of the aforementioned institutions has provided the feminist cause with material and human resources that the movement never had before (Threlfall 1985: 53). Furthermore, feminist bureaucracies have been useful in the attempt to translate the general goals of the movement into objectives for concrete public policies. This has been possible because state feminists now have a permanent place in the arena of power (Stetson and Mazur 1995: 1). The femocrats now occupy sufficiently high positions on the bureaucratic ladder to be theoretically capable of bringing matters which concern women, such as parental leave or domestic violence, to the attention of senior state officials (Eisenstein 1991: 23). This positive assessment of femocrats' capacity to claim public space for women's issues informs most of the recent scholarly literature on state feminism (see for example Ryan 1990; Outshoorn 1994a: 9–11; Stetson and Mazur 1995).[4]

While studying the impact of state feminism in the policymaking process, it is important not to forget that this process is composed of some intrinsically interrelated stages: problem definition, agenda-setting, policy formulation, and policy implementation (Kingdom 1984: 3). This chapter argues that femocrats might play an important role in some stages, but not in others. The fragmented nature of their influence might be overlooked if we only consider the process as a whole.

The relationship between femocrats and activists in the women's movement has been complicated in many western countries. This is hardly surprising, since both pursue the same broad objectives (although through

different means), i.e. to speak on behalf of some sectors of the female population and to improve the status of women. Femocrats and feminists may differ in the means chosen to pursue the same goals. From the femocrats' viewpoint, it is important that the objectives of gender equality are not confined to women grouped in feminist circles. Thus, femocrats concentrate their efforts on the formulation and implementation of public policies, regarding them as a useful means to enhance the status of many female citizens, most of whom do not belong to any women's association (Ryan 1990: 81). Conversely, some activists of the movement think that femocrats are not able to diminish gender hierarchies, for two reasons. On the one hand, state feminists have, in real terms, very little power within the state to promote policies of gender equality. On the other hand, when women work for the state as femocrats, they might sooner or later be co-opted, in the sense that their demands become increasingly moderate, or even symbolic. This is because radical demands normally jeopardise their careers within the state (see Watson 1990: 10).[5]

A more positive assessment of the relationship between femocrats and feminists is maintained by Georgia Duerst-Lahti (1989: 250, 258). She affirms that in some cases collaboration between the two could be mutually beneficial. The former have material and human resources that the latter almost always lack. Equally, the existence of a strong, highly mobilised feminist movement might be useful to femocrats for two reasons. First, all policymakers compete against other state officials to obtain more resources. It may be helpful for them to show their superiors that broad sectors of the population are interested in such issues, and as a result would mobilise around them. Second, for various reasons, state officials are often unable to defend propositions considered too radical. Nevertheless, if they favour these options, they are in a position to benefit from organisations in civil society mobilising in support of these demands. In my view, there is a third reason which supports Duerst-Lahti's argument. It may be advantageous for state feminists if a powerful feminist movement advocates radical measures. In this situation femocrats can present themselves to conservatives and to the population in general as the supporters of moderate and viable options.

The next section considers an empirical case, that of the Institute of the Woman in Spain. It examines the IW's impact on policymaking in the area of gender equality, and the relations between femocrats and feminists.

STATE FEMINISM AT WORK: THE *INSTITUTO DE LA MUJER* IN SPAIN (1983–95)

The IW was established in 1983, six years after the first democratic elections took place in Spain,[6] and one year after the Social Democratic Party first

gained power (Valiente 1995),[7] which it retained until 1996. The IW is an administrative unit which was first attached to the Ministry of Culture and then moved to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The IW has its own director, facilities, and independent budget. In spite of its late establishment in comparison with feminist machineries in other western countries, the IW is nowadays comparable to them in terms of personnel, budget and the extent of its functions. The staff and resources of the IW have constantly increased. This contrasts with the experience of feminist bureaucracies in some other countries, whose administrative level has been downgraded, and personnel and budget cut.[8] According to the 1994 IW annual report, 263 people worked in the institution in that year. It had an annual budget of about 2.6 billion pesetas or £12.5 million (Instituto de la Mujer 1995: 103–8).

The impact of the IW on the policy area of gender equality

Until now, empirical studies have given an affirmative answer to the question of whether or not state feminist institutions participate in a significant way in the formation of public policies which promote the status of women. For instance, a recent cross-national study covering fourteen countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the USA) concluded that state feminist bureaucracies in all these countries except Poland 'had an impact on equal employment policy (EEP) for women, that is, any state action seeking to eliminate direct and/or indirect discrimination based on gender in hiring, firing, professional training, and promotion'. In other words, institutions 'established with a mandate to focus directly on women's status, have the capacity to turn leaders' attention, in some cases for the first time, to laws and regulations that can change the status of women in relation to men' (Stetson and Mazur 1995: 272, 275). This section examines the sort of impact the IW has had, by focusing not only on EEP, but also on other types of equality policies, and by examining separately the impact of state feminists in the different stages of the policymaking process.[9]

Equality policies established by other institutions at the IW's request

In common with the majority of state feminist institutions in advanced industrial societies, the IW has neither the responsibility nor the budget to formulate and implement most gender equality policies; rather, it has the explicit function of convincing other state units to adopt these policies. In the early 1980s, gender equality policies were so unknown among political

and bureaucratic elites in Spain that the first femocrats had to dedicate much of their energy to informing state officials that these measures were already in existence in most western countries, and convincing them to establish some of these programmes. Femocrats carried out this initial task of transmitting information and lobbying through informal contacts with policymakers and through the meetings of the IW advisory council – *Consejo Rector* (CD). This was created in 1985 to advise the IW director. The CD was primarily made up of representatives from the majority of government ministries. Until the late 1980s a complete CD met at least once every six months, and a smaller committee met at least once every quarter. In both meetings, the representatives of the ministries learned the basics of equality policymaking, explained the measures their departments planned to take, and received suggestions, advice, and considerable pressure to become more involved in the pursuit of gender equality.

In 1987 femocrats felt they needed policy instruments other than these informal contacts with state officials and the CD meetings, to circumvent the unequal commitment of different ministries to gender-based equality, to prevent their efforts from being dispersed, and to pressurise the ministries to establish gender equality policies. In consequence, state feminists prepared a first equality plan, containing a comprehensive set of measures to be taken by thirteen ministries between January 1988 and December 1990 (Instituto de la Mujer 1990b: 1–101). Femocrats had previously negotiated with the ministries in an attempt to ensure that the plan only included measures which they were truly willing to implement.

The 120 measures which made up the first plan may be divided into six types: legal reforms aimed at achieving equality between men and women before the law; initiatives for non-sexist education; equal employment measures; women-specific health programmes; the development of international cooperation projects with women in other countries, and the promotion of feminist associations in Spain. The first equality plan constituted a turning point in that it meant (at least in theory) the end of a set of dispersed short-term efforts made by ministries at the request of state feminists and femocrats themselves (see below), and the introduction of a degree of joint medium-term planning by femocrats and state officials. A second equality plan was prepared by the IW for the period 1993–5 (Instituto de la Mujer 1993b). It mainly contains equality policies of a type similar to those of the first plan. The second equality plan was still in force when the empirical research for this chapter was undertaken. At that time it was still too early to evaluate this second programme, so only the first plan is examined here.

The first equality plan had the very important defect of being characterised by a high level of abstraction (with the exception of the legal

reforms). For example, measure 3.3.1 was to promote the 'professional training of rural women ... in managerial and commercial skills'. Yet nothing was said about who was going to organise the courses, how many were to be organised, how were they going to be financed, their characteristics or beneficiaries. Such extreme abstraction constitutes an insurmountable obstacle at the evaluation stage, because if goals are not clearly established, it is impossible to evaluate whether they have been reached or not.

The IW concluded, in its own evaluation, that the implementation of the first plan had been highly successful, since out of the 120 measures planned, 116 were adopted (Instituto de la Mujer 1990b: 105–55). Nevertheless, this conclusion has to be treated with great caution. This is because the information which served as the basis for this evaluation was given to the IW by the thirteen ministries, who might have overemphasised their gender equality actions, and underestimated (or even concealed) what they had failed to do.

The examination of the first equality plan shows that Spanish femocrats have been partially successful as problem-definers and as agenda-setters.[10] With regard to problem definition, feminist theorists have proposed that one of the sources of women's subordination is the existence in all societies of a broadly accepted distinction between public and private matters. Some problems are generally considered as 'public' in that it is believed that they should be solved by the state or civil society. In contrast, other topics are conceptualised as 'private', i.e. the concern of individuals or their families. Matters falling in the latter category, such as the unequal status of husbands and wives within marriage, or the violence sometimes perpetrated by the former on the latter, are issues that, in line with the feminist slogan that 'the personal is political', have to be handled – and solved – in the community.

Femocrats have been quite active in the task of converting 'private' matters into 'public' problems. State feminists have always promoted the existence in the institutional arena of forums (conferences, seminars, round tables, meetings) where such topics could be discussed both in public and in smaller gatherings among state officials. In these forums, issues such as rape within marriage or sexual harassment in the workplace began to be treated not as 'things of life' or citizens' private business, but as social problems which deserve public attention (and solutions). Some policy decision-makers have been convinced by state feminists that issues previously considered 'private' are really the concern of public authorities.

With respect to agenda-setting, IW femocrats also have a positive record, since they succeeded in persuading other political actors to introduce equality goals into their agendas. In fact, if the IW had not existed, many of these ministries would probably never have established equality

measures, or would not have introduced them as soon as they did. However, it is impossible to make a similarly positive assessment of the IW's performance in the stages of policy formulation and implementation. Specific and concrete measures to tackle various types of gender inequalities are formulated within ministries, or parliament, which in general try hard to preserve and reinforce their own powers. State feminists have little influence in these two arenas when a choice is being made between the various alternatives available to address a problem.

As for the implementation of gender equality policies, the IW is formally in charge of controlling this stage. This control function has been, in theory, mainly carried out through the IW legal department and the meetings of the IW advisory council. Nevertheless, in practice absolutely nothing happened if a ministry failed to implement the equality measures it was supposed to introduce, because the IW has no powers of sanction over ministries. This lack of powers of sanction is not a peculiarity of the IW, since in Spain, in general, hardly any institution exists with enough power to control (in real as opposed to symbolic terms) other institutions of similar status. For this reason, consciously or otherwise, IW staff may have acted as if it were reasonable to concentrate their efforts on other objectives which are considered more easily realisable, for instance, the very few tasks that the IW can perform alone, which are studied next.[11]

Gender equality policies established by the IW

The IW has the responsibility and budget to perform only three tasks: to promote research, to diffuse information about women's rights, and to receive and handle complaints of discrimination against women. With regard to research activities, it should be highlighted that before 1983 little research had been carried out on women's issues in Spain, in comparison with other western countries. Since then, according to its annual reports, the IW has published books, periodicals, posters, and brochures at an average rate of thirty-six a year. Along with other activities, the IW has also commissioned research and established a documentation centre in Madrid.

In relation to the diffusion of information about women's rights among the Spanish population (especially among women), the IW has set up information centres (*centros de información de los derechos de la mujer*) in some cities, where citizens can obtain information about women's rights.[12] These centres have answered a total of some 50,000 requests for information per year. The most common users of this service have been urban women aged 25–55, married and with one or two children, who have completed compulsory schooling but did not attend further education, who

do not perform waged work outside the home, and whose family units have had an income of approximately twice the minimum wage.

In addition, a toll-free women's rights information phone line was set up in 1991, in an attempt to extend the service to women who do not live in cities. By the end of 1994, this phone line answered 241,038 calls (Instituto de la Mujer 1995: 65). The most common users of this line have again been urban women (in spite of the objective of spreading information to non-urban areas) aged 25–35, who have either not completed compulsory schooling or have completed it, but without further education, and who do not perform waged work outside the home. The IW has contributed significantly to the diffusion of information about women's rights through these information centres and the toll-free phone line. Nevertheless, some sectors of the female population still do not benefit from its services; these are mainly rural women, and those who are aged 45 or over, typically those who tend to be the least aware of their rights.

As for the reception and handling of complaints of discrimination against women, it is important to note that the IW can initiate a legal complaint with the appropriate authorities only at the request of women who believe that they have been discriminated against. The IW cannot lodge complaints without the victims' permission. The IW does not represent women in court. The number of these complaints has been low: an average of fifty-six a year. Femocrats gave two reasons to explain this low number: the fear many Spanish women have of initiating legal action, and their lack of awareness of their own rights and the ways to defend them. It could also be argued that the IW has not provided incentives for a more extensive use of the service. Similarly, it might be the case that when Spanish female citizens think that they have been discriminated against, they go to other places in search of information and legal advice, for instance to the women's departments in trade unions, if the discrimination problem is work related.

The relationship of the IW with the women's movement: practicing feminism without the feminists?

The relationship between feminists in state institutions and in society has varied over time and/or among countries. Several studies have revealed episodes of fruitful cooperation between femocrats and activists in the women's movement. In her study of state feminism in the USA at the federal and state level in the 1960s, Georgia Duerst-Lahti reported episodes of collaboration of the two actors. Likewise, according to Joyce Outshoorn (1992b: 11–12; 1994a: 1, 14–16), the existence of alliances between feminists, femocrats, parliamentarians, and high-level bureaucrats is, in the Netherlands, a necessary although not a sufficient precondition for the

formulation and successful implementation of gender equality policies. Similarly, Drude Dahlerup (1993: 17), in her research on unemployment policies in Denmark in the 1980s, found that in spite of the opposition of many members of the political parties, trade unions, and employers' organisations, some unemployment policies were designed according to the principles of radical feminism (for instance, courses for women only). In part this was made possible by the existence of a cooperative network formed by some femocrats, feminists, feminist researchers, scholars and female trade unionists, who supported such radical initiatives.

On the contrary, in countries such as France (Mazur 1995: 90–2) or Great Britain (Lovenduski 1995: 127–9), relations between femocrats and feminists have been almost non-existent, or have been scarce and characterised by reticence, lack of cooperation, and even confrontation. In this section I argue that Spain belongs to this latter group of countries. I wish to examine three aspects of these relationships: the informal contacts between femocrats and feminists, the access the latter have to IW decision-making, and the IW policy of subsidising women's associations. Finally, I will explore the consequences of these tense relationships.

Informal relationships between IW personnel and members of feminist organisations in Spain have, with some exceptions, been almost non-existent. This contrasts with the frequent informal links between femocrats and feminists in other countries, for instance, in the Netherlands (Outshoorn 1992b: 7) or in Australia up to the mid-1980s (Sawer 1990: 25). As for feminists' access to decision-making in state feminist machineries, this has existed in some countries, such as Denmark (Borchorst 1995) or Norway (Bystydzienski 1995). In Spain, such access has been extremely limited, and as explained below, was restricted to the participation in the IW advisory council of a small number of gender equality advocates until the 1990s, and of some members of women's organisations since then.

Since its foundation, the IW advisory council included not just representatives of most government ministries but also six other members called *vocales*. They were appointed by the minister on the recommendation of the IW's director. These *vocales* had to be outstanding proponents of gender equality in their professional or public lives. Nevertheless, they cannot be considered representative of the feminist movement for two reasons. On the one hand, they were nominated as a result of their individual commitment to gender equality, and not because of their activities in women's groups. On the other hand, they were not elected by any feminist organisation to represent it in the IW advisory council.

In 1988 the IW promoted the formation of a commission made up exclusively of feminists in charge of monitoring the implementation of the equality plan. Suspicions about this move by the femocrats was immediately

noted by activists in the women's movement. They resented having been asked to evaluate the implementation of a plan which they had not been invited to formulate. Moreover, feminists doubted that the IW femocrats were in fact interested either in the commission's evaluation of the implementation of the equality plan or in the initiation of long-term cooperative links with the movement. The feminists' suspicions appear reasonable if we bear in mind that activists were not invited to participate in the formulation and the monitoring of the second equality plan.[13] For all these reasons, some activists decided not to take part in the work of the commission.

Due to the numerous disagreements arising among the feminists participating in the commission, some abandoned it before the completion of its work. These differences of opinion made it difficult to agree on even the most basic recommendations. This experience revealed to many activists the difficulties involved when members of different organisations work together. Besides, many participants were of the opinion that working with (or for) the institutions was a waste of time and energy.

When the commission finished its deliberations, three representatives of feminist organisations and one representative of the women's departments of each of the two main Spanish unions, the *Unión General de Trabajadores* and *Comisiones Obreras* were appointed members of the IW advisory council, substituting the former six *vocales* (Instituto de la Mujer 1991: 143). In the spring of 1994 the participation of these five women in the IW advisory council was the only permanent formal channel of access for feminists to IW's decision-making. Nevertheless, they only obtained it in the early 1990s, when the advisory council almost ceased to meet. This is not a paradox but a partial confirmation of feminists' suspicion that IW femocrats have not been truly interested in building permanent bridges of collaboration with the women's movement.

Why are informal and formal relationships between feminists and femocrats so scarce and tense in Spain? The question is particularly intriguing given the fact that many feminists, who in the 1980s were sceptical (or even opposed) to the establishment of state feminist institutions, have eventually accepted the desirability of the existence of these machineries, even if they are still very critical of what IW femocrats actually do. As for informal links, in other countries such as the Netherlands (Outshoorn 1994a: 5–6) or Australia (Franzway, Court and Connell 1989: 138), an important number of femocrats had previously been members of women's organisations. In fact, in many cases, having been engaged in the feminist movement is a 'merit' in the curriculum vitae of candidates applying for a position in a state feminist institution. These countries are precisely those in which frequent informal links exist between feminists and

femocrats. When some of the former decided to work for the state, they found it natural to maintain their personal ties with women who remained in the movement, their companions in past battles. In Spain the fact that only a minority of IW femocrats were activists before they became state feminists definitely prevented the maintenance of informal relations with women in the movement, simply because these links had never existed.

The Spanish feminist movement is highly fragmented. According to IW data, approximately 100 women's associations (not all of them feminist) exist at national level, and some 3,000 at regional and local level. For some feminists, this atomisation is a rather positive feature of the movement, because, in consequence, women with very different interests can find the organisation most appropriate for them. On the contrary, most femocrats see fragmentation as an insurmountable obstacle to collaboration between them and feminists, because the latter have so many spokespeople and points of view.

The establishment of long-term cooperative links between feminists and femocrats has also been hampered because some of the latter have not seen collaboration as necessary or even desirable. Some state feminists consider that public policies should be formulated only by policymakers, since they are members of, or have been appointed by, political parties elected by the population. Activists in the women's movement are perceived as illegitimate participants in the policymaking process, since they have not been elected to play this role. Similarly, some femocrats think that public policies should be implemented exclusively by state officials, because they have passed the required public examinations to work for the state, and therefore in theory have the necessary qualifications to perform that task. Feminists are seen either as individuals who do not have the required technical skills to implement public policies, or as merely enthusiastic amateurs completely ignorant of the bureaucratic rules of procedure.

Some activists in the women's movement have also opposed the idea of collaboration with institutions. This attitude has historical roots. Some feminist groups were formed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and participated in the opposition to the authoritarian regime (Scanlon 1990: 94). This experience left most feminists with a legacy of ambivalence towards the state, given that for many years they had fought against those who held political power, instead of learning how to use state resources to achieve feminist goals.

By far the most important formal contact between the IW and women's groups has been the subsidies the former has given to the latter. Approximately 10–15 per cent of the IW's budget has been devoted to subsidising women's (but not necessarily feminist) organisations. Subsidies of this type also exist in other countries, for instance France (Mazur 1995: 91–2),

Germany (Ferre 1991–2), and the Netherlands (Outshoorn 1994a). In Spain, in the early years of the IW, subsidies were granted without the IW specifying definite criteria regarding the type of projects to be organised. Conversely, since the late 1980s, the IW has only been subsidising programmes whose objectives have been strictly defined in accordance with the IW's priorities.

The policy of subsidising the women's movement has had the unintended effect of raising the level of animosity of activists towards the IW. Many feminists have been deeply critical of this policy, but this has not impeded them from continuing to apply for, and receive, subsidies. Some activists suspect that the organisations which have received most funding are those which have close links with the ruling party and not those which have worked the hardest to improve the status of women. Some feminists have argued that by imposing such strict criteria about the type of projects to be subsidised, the IW has jeopardised the autonomy of the movement. This is because the IW has indicated to women's organisations the type of activities they should concentrate their efforts on. In order to understand this complaint, it should be noted that the IW has increasingly subsidised projects (such as refuges for battered women or centres which provide support to separated or divorced women or rape victims) but organisational weakness undermines the support it offers to a broad range of issues. Feminists have thought that these projects are very useful in improving the status of certain women. Nevertheless, feminists also believe that the projects should not be exclusively dedicated to the provision of services that the state cannot or does not want to provide. Other activities are also important for some women's groups, e.g. consciousness-raising activities, but in general these are no longer subsidised by the IW as they were a decade ago.

Feminists have also criticised the fact that, in their view, subsidies have been given in some cases to women who have not been 'true' members of the women's movement but instead opportunist newcomers to the feminist milieu. They have actually been unemployed women in search of self-employment. The Spanish female unemployment rate (in percentages) rose from 20.8 in 1983 to 27.6 in 1988, then fell to 25.4 in 1989, before rising again to 29.2 in 1993 (El País 1995: 435). Given the high female unemployment rates and the existence of IW subsidies, some unemployed women might have established feminist associations which provided the type of social services that the IW has consistently subsidised. These associations might in fact have been primarily created to give their founders jobs.

In short, generally speaking, relations between IW femocrats and feminists have been scarce and conflictual. State feminists have maintained

very few informal links with the women's movement. The access of feminists to IW decision-making has been extremely limited. The main formal link between most activists in the women's movement and the IW has been the subsidies that the latter granted to the former. As a consequence, both have lost crucial opportunities to initiate political reforms, and this initiative has been taken by other actors such as political parties. Abortion provides a telling example of the limitations arising from the failure of feminists and femocrats to actively collaborate. Act 9 of 5 July 1985 allows abortion in three circumstances: when the woman has been raped, when pregnancy would seriously endanger the life of the mother, and when the foetus has malformations. The majority of IW femocrats and feminists are in favour of a more permissive abortion law. Nevertheless they have not collaborated, in that the former initiate broad public debate about the issue and the latter organise mobilisations. In the absence of joint action, an initiative for political reform which might lead to the approval of a less restrictive legislation has been left to other actors, for instance the political party in power.

CONCLUSION

Through the study of the main state feminist institution of the central state in Spain, this chapter has shown that the impact of state feminist machineries on policymaking is significant, since public policies established by the IW or by other state units at the IW's request have raised the status of women. The IW itself has established three types of measure: the promotion of research on gender issues, the diffusion of information about women's rights, and the reception and handling of complaints of discrimination against women. The IW has neither the responsibility nor the budget to establish most gender equality programmes, but has been given the explicit function of trying to persuade other state units to set up these programmes. The IW has been quite active in the task of defining public problems, that is to say, in persuading state officials that issues which in the past were seen as 'private', such as domestic violence, are in fact social problems which deserve attention and solutions from the state. State feminists have also been able to include gender equality measures in the agenda of other politicians and senior bureaucrats. In contrast, the role played by IW femocrats is usually modest or even irrelevant when policies are formulated and implemented.

Relations between feminists in the Spanish state and those in society have usually been rare and conflictual. As a consequence, both have lost crucial opportunities to push state officials further down the path of equality. Activists in the women's movement could have acted as the eyes and ears

of state feminists in the task of ensuring that equality programmes were actually implemented. This has not happened, and as a result the IW has not in fact controlled the implementation of these programmes, which, given the IW's resources, is an enormous task. Concerted action between femocrats and feminists could also have been taken in order to reform some legislation, such as the Abortion Act. In the absence of cooperation of this type, the initiative for political reform has fallen to other political actors.

As for future research, it might be interesting to explore the real impact that gender equality policies promoted by femocrats have had on the lives of different sectors of the female population. In particular, it would be important to know if these measures are in fact reducing the inequality of opportunities for women – a traditional feminist aspiration. As this chapter has shown with regard to the IW information centres, it might be the case that equality policies have been disproportionately beneficial to some women, for instance to those who live in cities and are younger (or in case of measures other than the information centres, those who have completed university education), that is, women who are already in a better position with respect to other women (and some men). Research in Denmark for example, has similarly indicated that state feminists have been embracing the interests of well educated, rather than unskilled or marginalised women (Borchorst 1995: 72–3).

A second question to be addressed in the future would concern the style of policymaking in feminist bureaucracies. The IW has been able to convince other institutions that the establishment of equality measures is an appropriate and desirable political goal. As has been explained by Drude Dahlerup (1993: 18) writing about the Danish case, the art of political persuasion consists of advancing demands that do not irritate political opponents, and in finding points of common agreement with them, while in some cases abandoning other demands. These also happen to be characteristics of the political actions of IW femocrats, but other aspects may also exist which have yet to be explored in the Spanish and other national contexts.

NOTES

1 This chapter originated as my initial contribution to an international study of state feminism in advanced industrialised societies, directed by Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy G. Mazur. I am indebted to both of them for the organisation of such a theoretically challenging and empirically interesting research project, whose first outcome was the volume edited by Stetson and Mazur (1995). The first findings about state feminism in Spain were published in Valiente (1995). I am grateful to those interviewed for this chapter for generously giving their time and providing me with valuable information and

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2 The research for this chapter has mainly consisted of analysis of published and unpublished IW documents, legislation, political party documents, and thirty-four in-depth personal interviews with IW personnel and members of feminist organisations conducted between March and September 1994. In order to maintain the anonymity of those interviewed, their names do not appear in this chapter, but are available on request.

3 These opinions (with which the authors do not agree) can be found in Eisenstein (1991: 22, 76–7) and Stetson and Mazur (1995: 2).

4 This sort of positive assessment informs most of the recent scholarly literature on state feminism.

5 These arguments found in Watson (1990: 10) are not presented as Watson's own views.

6 From the second half of the 1930s until 1975 Spain was governed by a right-wing authoritarian regime, which was notably anti-feminist.

7 The establishment of the IW and the main formal characteristics of the institution are described in Valiente (1995).

8 For example, in France in 1986, the Ministry of Woman's Rights was downgraded to a Delegation on Women's Status dependent on the Ministry of Social Affairs, and its operating budget was reduced (Mazur 1995: 82).

9 One caveat is necessary at this point. The evaluation of the IW's impact on policymaking made here is not complete because the costs of the IW's achievements are not measured. Therefore this article does not raise the question of whether the objectives attained by the IW could have also been achieved through the same concrete programmes but organised at a lower cost, or through other, less expensive programmes.

10 The agenda 'is the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside the government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time' (Kingdom 1984: 3).

11 The low importance attached to the function of controlling the implementation of gender equality measures is reflected, for instance, in the low number of people who work in the IW legal department. In the spring of 1994, when most of the interviews for this research were conducted, five people worked in the IW legal department, which was responsible for, among other matters, examining the implementation of all central state gender equality policies in Spain.

12 These information centres were not a creation of the IW, because an earlier central state feminist institution, the *Subdirección General de la Mujer*, dependent on the Ministry of Culture, had already set up three, which the IW inherited when it was established. The number of centres were: three until 1984; four in 1985; ten in 1986; and eleven since 1987.

13 At least not until May 1994, when the last interview with a feminist was conducted for this article.